



I grew up in a small community in Scotland hearing every year the prediction that March comes in like a lion and goes out like a lamb. Although opinions are divided about the origins of this proverb, the farmers certainly seemed to agree with it, recognising that the nasty winter weather carrying over from February would likely transition to the springtime of April, and that the fishermen expected stormy March to give way to better conditions in April. This may be pretty predictable in Europe and some other parts of the world; however, I'm sure that many of you can remember snowstorms in southern Ontario in April – and even early May.

Another suggested source is the cycle of the constellations which we see in the night sky: at the start of March, the constellation Leo (the Lion) is on the eastern horizon at sunset. By the end of the month, Aries (the Ram) is on the western horizon." Sadly, the diminishing breadth of general knowledge means that many people no longer recognise the constellations and the proverb, like many others, loses its meaning. (Much like a pet peeve of mine when people say, "He wants to have his cake and eat it too" when the actual proverb is "Eat your cake and have it too", suggesting that you want two opposite truths to coexist!)

If we follow the readings of our Lectionary, we note that March begins with strong teachings by Jesus on what we are called to be and do. The Transfiguration account presents Jesus in strength and highlights his divinity. By Sunday, April 5th, we are seeing Jesus start to submit to the indignities which will culminate in the realisation of the prediction of Isaiah 53:7 where the suffering servant is led like a lamb to the slaughter and submits without objection to his accusers. And let's not forget the earlier allegory in Isaiah 11:6 that the lion and the lamb will lie down together.

This cycle, too, is one we hear every year. Unlike the weather, which is a constant topic of conversation, the story of Jesus' journey to the cross is one which we may need a little nudge to revisit. That is why we are intentional in setting goals for ourselves in Lent: to pray more, to fast more, and to be more generous in our almsgiving. Jesus' challenge to Peter to "feed my lambs" brings us back to the pastoral theme, to the farming allegories which would have been much more easily interpreted by our ancestors.

In the Gospel of John, we are reminded that, "This is the bread that came down from heaven. Your ancestors ate manna and died, but whoever feeds on this bread will live forever." (John 6:58) It's up to us to reflect on that and to remember the strong defense of Jesus in the opening readings of Lent, when he says to the Devil in the desert, "One does not live on bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God." (Matthew 4:4). When we receive the Eucharist, do we remind ourselves of how much this is feeding us – and how much we need it on a regular basis?



If we, indeed, take seriously our responsibility to feed the lambs, it means that we are responsible for their welfare in providing all the necessities of life – and that we do this through our direct care of those entrusted to us, but also through our almsgiving. As Jesus makes clear in his words to the Devil, however, feeding someone also requires that the spiritual food be given as well.

The safety directions on an aircraft remind us to take care of our own needs so that we can then care for the others around us. Let's make sure in this Lent that we are feeding our relationship with God and our souls so that we can better feed the lambs we have accepted to nurture.

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